

April 26, 2016

## Mission readiness top priority for heavy lift helicopter community

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Members of the Blue-Green Team pose for group photo in front of an MH-53E during a tour at Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Squadrons (HM) 14 in Norfolk, Va. The team met to tackle mission readiness issues related to H-53 helicopters shared between the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps, such as maintenance processes, procedures, and training. From the left: Lt. Cmdr. Michael Lanzillo, HM-14 maintenance officer; Lt. Col. Enrique Azenon, Marine Aircraft Group (MAG) 29 Personal Support Detachment commanding officer; Capt. Melissa DePriest, Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron (MALS) 29 assistant aircraft maintenance officer; Maj. Paul Herrle, MALS-29 aircraft maintenance officer; Lt. Col. Brian Taylor, Naval Air Systems Command H-53 Heavy Lift Helicopter Program In-Service Integrated Product Team co-lead; Cmdr. Grady Duffey, wing maintenance officer Helicopter Sea Combat Wing Atlantic Fleet; Col. Sean Salene, MAG-29 commanding officer; Cmdr. Derek Brady, HM-14 commanding officer; Lt. Col. Michael Harmon, Marine Heavy Helicopter Training Squadron 302 commanding officer; Lt. j.g., Samuel Martin, HM-14 assistant maintenance officer; and Capt. Ryan Pusins, Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 366 aircraft safety officer. (U.S. Marine Corps photo)

**NORFOLK, Va. –** The Naval Air Systems Command's (NAVAIR) H-53 Heavy Lift Helicopter Program (PMA-261) met in Norfolk Apr. 18 with U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Navy leaders and maintainers as part of their efforts to increase mission readiness.

Both the Navy and Marine Corps have put aviation readiness at the top of their priority list, and Marine Aircraft Group (MAG) 29 along with Commander, Helicopter Sea Combat Wing Atlantic (CHSCWL) spearheaded a "Blue-Green Team" initiative to share maintenance "best practices."

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In order to share knowledge and best practices within the H-53 heavy lift community (the CH-53 is flown by the Marine Corps and the MH-53 is flown by the Navy), representatives from MAG-29 – Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron (MALS) 29, Marine Heavy Helicopter Training Squadron (HMHT) 302, and Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 366, and CHSCWL – Helicopter Mine Countermeasures Squadrons (HM) 14 and 15, and the Fleet Readiness Center (FRC) Mid-Atlantic, toured HM-14 and the FRC detachment along with PMA-261 experts. Together, this Blue-Green Team is tackling those mission readiness issues that can be addressed or best influenced at their working level, such as maintenance processes, procedures, and training.

U.S. Marine Corps Col. Sean Salene, commanding officer of MAG-29, participated in the tours and discussions throughout the day.

"Readiness is a team sport. With the help of our program office and all other stakeholders, the Blue-Green team is going to get the 'Big Iron' back on step," he said.

"Big Iron" is a term of affection for the H-53, used commonly throughout the heavy-lift community.

U.S. Marine Corps Col. Hank Vanderborght, PMA-261 program manager charged with H-53 readiness responsibilities for NAVAIR, stands behind Salene's assertion.

"This initiative by MAG-29 and Helicopter Sea Combat Wing Atlantic is exactly the kind of effort that will help get the required ready basic aircraft back on the flight line. Bravo Zulu to Col. Salene and Commodore Everly," he said.

During the FRC tour, the team was able to see first-hand how Navy and civilian maintainers work together in their integrated organizational and depot level repair work environment, conducting material condition inspections on aircraft prior to planned maintenance interval (PMI) induction, and twice between PMI events.

The Blue-Green Team plans further discussions to continue identifying capabilities that can be combined to assist one another.